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SUBJECT: Third Meeting of the Steering Group of the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality, October 22-23

REF: Brasilia 1167

11. Summary: In an October 22-23 Steering Group meeting of the U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality, the USG and GOB agreed on the following:

- the public launching of a \$400,000 Small Grants Program for educational and cultural projects to promote racial and ethnic equality;
- oversight responsibilities for the selection, monitoring and evaluation of such projects;
- support for efforts to cooperate in combating racial profiling by the Brazilian police; and
- endorsement of greater U.S. and Brazilian civil society and private sector involvement in the Joint Action Plan.

The meeting for the first time saw significant participation of Brazilian civil society and the election of four Brazilian civil society co-chairs. This will allow for more direct and effective interaction with the two U.S. civil society co-chairs and U.S. organizations. A/S Shannon, leading the U.S. side, encouraged civil society and the private sector participation in the Joint Action Plan as a means to address racial inequality and increase social inclusion. End summary.

12. In two days of discussion October 22-23 in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, the governments of Brazil and the United States agreed on a number of steps to advance the Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality. At this, the third meeting of the Steering Group of the Joint Action Plan since the U.S.-Brazilian agreement was signed in March 2008, the two governments announced the launching of a \$400,000 Small Grants Program for educational and cultural projects to promote racial and ethnic equality. Projects can be proposed by Brazilian civil society organizations working in partnership with U.S. organizations. The governments of both countries, through Brazil's Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR) and Ministry of External Relations (MRE) and the U.S. Department of State, will have oversight responsibilities for the selection, monitoring and evaluation of such projects.

#### Government Dialogues

13. The two governments engaged in in-depth policy dialogues on employment, education and health. Apart from SEPPIR (represented by Minister Edson Santos), MRE (represented by Under Secretary for Political Affairs Vera Machado), and the U.S. Department of State (represented by Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon) and U.S. Charge d'Affaires Lisa Kubiske, the following agencies participated in the dialogue: the Brazilian Ministries of Health, Justice, Labor and Employment, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Labor, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (represented by Acting Chair Stuart Ishimaru), the Inter-American Foundation (represented by President Larry Palmer), the Agency for International Development, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¶4. Employment: A number of initiatives were considered to increase access of Afro-descendant and indigenous people to the labor market, to guarantee equal pay for equal work and to improve the precarious situation of domestic workers in Brazil, most of whom are Afro-descendant and female. The two governments agreed to follow up on a proposal to apply the lessons of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, specifically in providing incentives for black-owned enterprises and training and employment opportunities for black workers.

¶5. Education: The two governments reviewed a number of projects already completed and suggested that future projects under the Joint Action Plan focus on job-oriented education and education below the university level where the impact of investment is greatest. In addition, it was agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on English teaching to prepare young people for entry into the labor market.

¶6. Health: The focus of the policy dialogue on health was on racial and ethnic disparities in the incidence of heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, other diseases and infant mortality. Brazil's Ministry of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention already collaborate extensively. The governments agreed, however, that more could be done, especially technical exchanges and assistance to eliminate the most pervasive disparities in the provision of health care.

¶7. On the margins of the Joint Action Plan meeting, officials of the Brazilian Ministry of Justice and U.S. Department of Justice, jointly with civil society representatives, outlined a project to cooperate in combating racial profiling by the Brazilian police.

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Planning for this project is ongoing.

#### Civil Society Panels

¶8. Members of Brazil's civil society elected four civil society committee co-chairs and, concurrent with the government meetings, joined their two U.S. counterparts in a series of panel discussions involving civil society organizations, government officials and representatives of the private sector of both countries to explore possibilities for binational cooperation in the areas of public security, health care for the black population, preservation of black culture, access to higher education and corporate social responsibility. Civil society representation was strong and vocal, often numbering over 40 a session, and Bahian state officials and nongovernmental organizations from Bahia also contributed significantly to these discussions.

¶9. Public security: A Brazilian Ministry of Justice official described his ministry's efforts to put police in positions of mentorship for disadvantaged youth. A professor of the Federal University of Bahia, however, claimed that the police were responsible for brutalizing black youth. U.S. participants from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Denver Police Department explained their work, respectively, to measure racial bias by police and to train police not to discriminate based on race.

¶10. Health care for the black population: A U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention official described a federal initiative called REACH to support lifestyle changes, build health-professional capacity and monitor outcomes to improve the health status in minority communities in the United States. A representative of the National Health Policy for the Black Population of Brazil outlined efforts to reduce racially-based health disparities, including a program started in 1996 to create a database of children with sickle-cell anemia in 15 states. A UCLA researcher described her studies on the health effects of racial discrimination and the role of the affected community in determining public health priorities.

¶11. Preservation of black culture: An American professor linked memory and self-preservation, noting the impact and legacy of the

African holocaust and how the U.S. civil rights movement helped to build a black identity based on pride and self-respect. A Brazilian museum curator spoke about the need to teach Afro-descendant youth the history of their people, and she said museums played a vital role in that task. During the discussion period, some audience members advocated establishment of a memorial to slavery with an emphasis on resistance and rebellion. There was also wide support for a festival of Afro-origin culture between Brazil and the United States, potentially expanding to include other countries in the African diaspora.

¶12. Access to higher education: A professor from UCLA outlined the history of affirmative action in the United States, and an American student noted how in California minority representation amongst university students dropped dramatically when certain affirmative action measures were abandoned. A Brazilian educator said that admission quotas were essential in Brazil to ensure educational opportunities for Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples.

#### Private Sector

¶13. Corporate social responsibility: U.S., Brazilian and third-country companies detailed their efforts to reach out to the Afro-Brazilian community both as a matter of philanthropy and to provide employment opportunities. Several audience members evinced skepticism while at the same time urging companies to do more.

#### Lessons Learned

¶14. We gleaned a number of lessons from the Salvador meeting that can be applied toward future meetings of the Steering Group:

- There should be a concentration on a narrower range of subjects to allow for more in-depth and interactive discussion.
- Large group discussions must have structure and discipline. An iron-willed but neutral and amiable moderator should limit the time for opening statements by panelists and cut off speechifying and irrelevant comments from the audience.
- Having concurrent meetings of government and civil society caused some in civil society to believe they were being cut out of the most important discussions and weakened our message of cooperation and joint action.
- The participation of specialized USG agencies, at both the technical and policy level, provides necessary expertise. However, senior-level officials need to be better utilized, e.g., given more time to speak in the Steering Group, and be programmed for related outside activities.

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-- High-level side meetings are critical. A/S Shannon had productive discussions with U.S. and Brazilian civil society and private sector representatives, helping to shore up support for the Joint Action Plan.

-- Between Steering Group meetings, there needs to be frequent interaction involving the USG, GOB and civil society/private sector actors to ensure continuous progress in achieving Joint Action Plan goals.

#### Comment

¶15. The Salvador meeting heralded a new level of cooperation between Brazil and the United States in promoting racial and ethnic equality and demonstrated significant interest on the part of Brazilian civil society organizations. This cooperation is not merely government to government, but involves civil society and, increasingly, the business sector of both countries. Our intention is to bring together the whole of our societies so that people from all walks of life can learn from their counterparts in the other country and cooperate in areas of mutual interest. The justice project mentioned in paragraph 7 above has the potential to become a major initiative of the Joint Action Plan. Meeting participants from both countries had a sense of forward movement in Salvador and are looking forward with enthusiasm to the next meeting of the Steering Group in the United States in April 2010.

Kubiske